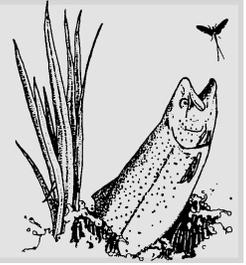


Stream Advocate



Adopt-A-Stream Program Newsletter

Winter 2002

Working with the Media as a Tool for River Protection

Many Stream Teams use the media as a tool to involve the community and increase membership and support for the river. Teams need to work with many outlets, including local and regional newspapers, specialized papers or magazines, radio, television and cable networks to reach different sectors of the population. The first step is to determine what type of exposure your event and/or river needs. Newsworthy items can vary from being an event such as a river cleanup, river trail opening or a grant announcement to an item for the calendar section. Articles are also a great way to network and thank event sponsors or partners.

While your group is focusing on working with the media, consider whose attention you are looking to attract. Your audience is not the media itself, but its readership or viewership. Media coverage is important to increasing your group's visibility, but do not hesitate to foster relationships directly as well. Contact your legislators; invite them to your events. Make sure your town officers, abutters and community members know about your event and the issues surrounding the river.

Recognize the best type of media coverage for your particular event. Visual elements can be very powerful. Remember that the river can be a backdrop for any event, ready for photos or video. Television best uses images to tell a story, but while it reaches a large number due to high viewership and wide distribution, it is transitory. Newspaper stories are more permanent and are easily copied and distributed at later events, or as part of newsletters, for example. A well-written article will also contain more information than a 25-second TV story. Radio also reaches a large audience and like TV, provides for a more personal story when it includes interviews. Magazines can also be substantive, but are often for more comprehensive stories, depending on the frequency of distribution. A magazine might be more likely to cover an event from a larger perspective of how the issue started, what the event accomplished and where the group is going next.

Don't forget to publicize the good stuff.

Develop a Relationship

One of the best outreach tools you have is a strong media relationship. Read the papers and get to know the reporters for both your local and regional newspapers. Work with the reporters so they understand the issues. A well-informed reporter will report the story correctly and fully. Think about adding reporters to your mailing list. Send them a copy of your newsletter to keep them informed. Be direct and honest about issues. If you build credibility, reporters will keep coming back.

Knowing not only who to contact, but also how to best work with each reporter can be key. Find out how they prefer to be contacted about stories, whether via phone, fax, or email. Understand that reporters work with deadlines. If you know your group is planning a river event such as a cleanup, notify media contacts early, maybe a month in advance, and then check back with them as you get closer to the date to get a photographer and a reporter out to cover the story.

Get to know the publications. What is their target audience? How might your work fit in? Most daily newspapers will want to write their own stories and take their own pictures, but this is not necessarily the case for all papers. If you cannot get a reporter involved in an issue, remember that you can always write letter to the editor. Create a media scrapbook to keep track of reporters, how best to contact them, and their media deadlines. If your group is focusing on a long-term issue, you should consider mapping out a 6 to 12-month media strategy. Develop a plan for each of your projects. How will you work with the different media outlets?

Different Media Outlets

On September 15th, the Massachusetts Watershed Coalition hosted a workshop co-sponsored with the Blackstone Headwaters Coalition and the Massachusetts Watershed Initiative on "How to Work With the Media". Present were media representatives from several different media outlets in the Worcester area.

John Monahan, the environmental reporter for the Worcester Telegram & Gazette, stressed the importance of developing a relationship with your local reporter. A daily paper with large circulation, the paper has bureaus all over the region for better access to stories. Call and introduce yourself and your group to the reporter. Because they are always working on a deadline, be sure to get back to a reporter promptly, even if you have no comment. This is part of developing a consistent and respectful relationship.

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June is Rivers Month. Plan an event to highlight your river! Look for an announcement in the upcoming Riverways Newsletter on how to list your event in our Calendar (May 11th - July 7th) or call the office. Submissions due by April 15th.

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Focus on where your story fits, suggests Steven Jones-D'Agostino. As editor of the biweekly *Worcester Business Journal* and the weekly alternative *Worcester Magazine*, Steve suggested consistently sending in press releases, even if they are seldom used. This way the reporter has contact information for your organization and might call you for information on other stories as well. Steve says he gives a press release a "two-second scan" before he decides which reporter gets the story, or if it will be dumped. (See side bar on how to write a press release.) Pay attention to special columns or annual focus sections. For example, Steve says the *Worcester Business Journal* partners with Mass Audubon to give annual water conservation awards to businesses.

Mary Braney, of Spencer Cable Access, said her station focuses primarily on local issues. Although they have access to professional producers to help with production and editing, the station also looks to partner with local groups. The station has limited staff but is working on an alliance with other cable access channels to produce better programming.



Shelley Sheldon of Newswatch 3, a Worcester based news program, said groups should understand that daily television news reporters work on a short time frame, usually four to five stories in a day, with a mid-day shift change. Because television is a visual media, a reporter is more likely to focus on a better-looking story if there is an

Press Release

A press release can be one of the most useful tools for letting newspapers know about your event. It is important that they be concise and well written. Keep in mind that while small papers may print your press release verbatim, at larger papers most just go into an in-box that reporters churn into short blurbs in their spare-time, between writing "real stories". Even at small newspapers, press releases rarely lead to front-page coverage; your article may be buried near the back of the paper. If you want the paper to elevate your story to more complete coverage, you will have to be more proactive about getting their attention.

A press release should be one page, and have the following basic components:

- Headline
- Contact information: your name and number
- Cover who, what, where, when, why and how in the beginning. Don't bury it.

For example, if you are advertising a cleanup, get the time date and location out in the first two sentences: The Fictitious Brook Stream Team is hosting a cleanup on the brook Saturday, Jan. 26 at 9AM. Meet in the High School parking lot.

Think about sending a photo along to grab attention. Even if your event is not covered by a reporter, send in a press release with the results of the event. Again, include a photograph.

option. So bring the event to the river. When working with news media, break down your story into a one-sentence sound bite, since this is very often all that will be aired. Unlike a lot of newspapers, television reporters generally do not specialize, but cover all issues. Again, if a group has an event well planned in advance, send in a notice and followup closer to the date. Keep sending in press releases, even if you do not always get coverage.

Finally, remember that the river is the star. Keep the attention focused on the river, while talking about what your group has accomplished. Give credit to the hard working volunteers and advocates, but at the end of the day you want the audience to remember the river.~

AVAILABLE FROM ADOPT-A-STREAM PROGRAM

Macroinvertebrate kits are available for use by Stream Teams. *Biomonitoring* provides a look at the overall health of a river. The presence of different macroinvertebrate groups can be an indicator of water quality based on the pollution tolerance levels of those groups. These starter kits are a great way to learn some of the basics of macroinvertebrate monitoring and get a look at what is crawling around in your stream. Included in the kit are identification cards, magnifying boxes, D-frame net and kick-net.

Hand held **GPS units** are also available. GPS (Global Positioning System) units are being used by Stream Teams to map tributaries, identify hot spots and potential monitoring sites, and map locations of pipes and stormdrains.

Call the office for more information on borrowing the monitoring kits, or GPS units. In both cases, materials generally cannot be mailed, so please allow time to coordinate pickup or delivery.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

New England Grassroots Environment Fund. This small grants program is designed to foster and give voice to grassroots environmental initiatives in the six New England states. Grants of up to \$2500 are provided to fuel civic engagement, local activism, and social change. For more information see www.grassrootsfund.org or contact Cheryl King Fischer, Exec. Director at 802-223-4622.

"One-Stop Shop" Web Site for Federal Grants. The new Federal Commons website, is available to provide a site for the entire federal grant application process. Maintained by Inter-Agency Electronic Grants Committee, the site allows users to search the General Services Administration catalog of federal grant programs. Eventually, the site will allow applicants to submit and track their grant applications on-line. For more information, see www.cfda.gov/federalcommons

More Resources & Grants in the Spring *Riverways Newsletter*.

MASSACHUSETTS WATER RESOURCES COMMISSION RELEASES PUBLIC COMMENT DRAFT OF *GUIDE TO LAWN AND LANDSCAPE WATER CONSERVATION*

Water suppliers and communities face a serious management challenge with increased water demand for landscape uses, especially during the typically dry summer months. This year, unseasonably warm fall temperatures and dry weather have stressed our local streams and rivers leading into the winter season. The Massachusetts Drought Management Task Force has issued a drought advisory for Massachusetts, citing average precipitation totals for the last 6 months of 60-70% of normal. Precipitation deficits are running 4 to 6 inches across Massachusetts since October 1st. Stream flow was reported as below normal for the entire state. New record minimum mean discharges were recorded at 13 stations including the Sudbury River at Sax, the Merrimack River at Lowell and the East Branch of the Swift River near Hardwick. Without significant winter snowfall, deficits will be felt next spring and summer.

In light of these facts, it is important to plan now for the coming year's water needs. A new public policy and guide for lawn and landscape water conservation is now available from the Massachusetts Water Resources Commission. This new public policy and guide provides management examples and ideas for water suppliers and communities to conserve and regulate the amount of water used on lawns and landscapes.



Section one of the guide includes ideas on developing and using a drought management plan to identify specific levels of drought and corresponding restrictions and practices. Section two makes recommendations about water conservation by-laws, including by-laws for land clearing and lawn size, use of automatic sprinkler systems and linking restrictions to a drought management plan. Section three outlines public outreach techniques and provides information on water efficient landscaping practices. It is important to plan early to avert possible public safety or health problems during a summer drought, and this guide can help get communities started developing plans and by-laws. Comments on the draft policy were solicited in January. Copies available at www.state.ma.us/envir/drafts.htm.

DOCUMENTING STREAM FLOWS

Stream Teams across the state are increasingly taking an active role in seeking to protect and restore natural flow regimes in streams through raising public awareness of this issue and encouraging favorable action by local governments. A new Pygmy Type flow meter, suitable for measuring flow rates in wadable streams, is now available for use with staff assistance. Also, Watershed Ecologist Margaret Kearns, new to the Riverways Programs, is available to work with river advocates on streamflow issues. Stream Teams are encouraged to let Margaret know about any low-flow conditions they have observed that are not wholly attributable to natural conditions (such as lack of rainfall) for eventual compilation into a statewide inventory and action plan. Working as local advocates, Stream Teams are well-poised to document low flow conditions and to seek protective and/or remedial action where necessary. Margaret can be reached at (617) 626-1533 or <margaret.kearns@state.ma.us>.

STREAM TEAMS ACROSS THE STATE

Stream Teams are continuing to do excellent work all around Massachusetts. This past fall, surveys were completed on the following rivers:

- ◆ **Neponset River Estuary** in Quincy and Milton
- ◆ **Fore and Town Rivers** in Quincy
- ◆ **Canton River** in Canton
- ◆ **Aberjona River** in Reading, Woburn and Winchester
- ◆ **Herring River** in Scituate

The Adopt-A-Stream Program would also like to recognize the students in the Wheaton College "Ponds to Particles" class for their work on Shoreline Surveys of the **Ten Mile River** and **Scotts Brook** in Plainville and North Attleboro and on the **Wading River** and **Rumford River** in Norton. Their data will be valuable to the Ten Mile and Taunton River watershed teams as well as the Department of Environmental Protection.

This winter and spring, the Adopt-A-Stream program will be working with groups in the SuAsCo towns of **Ashland** and **Northboro** to prepare for Shoreline Surveys, as well as continuing our work with groups in the **North and South Rivers** watershed, the **Blackstone River** watershed, **Boston Harbor** watersheds and **Chicopee River** watershed. We are also hoping to forge new ventures in the **Westport River** and **Taunton River** watersheds. A spring survey is also planned for **Quinebaug River** and tributaries in Sturbridge and Southbridge. If you have any questions or suggestions for Stream Teams in your watershed, please call the Adopt-A-Stream Program at 617-626-1549.

Read Stream Teams updates in the upcoming Spring Riverways Newsletter for more on Stream Teams across Massachusetts.



Cohassee Brook, in Southbridge, is one of the heavily sedimented Quinebaug tributaries that the Stream Team plans to survey this spring. Photo by Ken Pickren

UPCOMING EVENTS

Mass Audubon's Broadmoor Sanctuary, in Natick, is sponsoring a series of eight **presentations on ecological landscaping** on Thursday evenings January - March. The topics are: Bird & Butterfly Gardens (1/31), Lawn Alternatives (2/7), The Woodland Garden (2/14), Wildflower Gardens (2/21), Drought-Tolerant Landscapes (2/28) and Planting for Fall and Winter Interest (3/7). The programs are presented by Jim Donahue, landscape designer and member of the Ecological Landscaping Association (ELA, www.ela-ecolandscapingassn.org). For more information contact the Sanctuary at (508) 655-2296, or see www.massaudubon.org

Massachusetts Watershed Coalition Annual Meeting, March 30th. Call the Coalition for more information 978-534-0379.

National River Cleanup Week May 11-18th. Register your cleanup at www.americaoutdoors.org/nrcw and receive free supplies.

Biodiversity Days. Join others around the state to discover and record what plants and animals live your community. Tentative dates are May 31, June 1, 2, 3. Now in its third year, learn more about this EOE program on their webpage www.state.ma.us/envir/biodiversity.htm, or by contacting Cindy Cormier (cynthia.cormier@state.ma.us or 626-1116).

The **Adopt-A-Stream Program** works to support and encourage local stream teams and communities in efforts to protect and restore the ecological integrity of the Commonwealth's watersheds; rivers, streams and adjacent lands.

For more information or to receive our newsletter, please contact:

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Also check out our web-site:
www.massriverways.org

*Riverways Programs, Joan Kimball, Director
Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Environmental Law
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